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The Armoured Angels of Terra

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I sat on my bed, my head in my hands, as I wept for myself and my soldiers.

This world was lost, its people slaughtered.

We were the last bastion remaining.

The week had started like any other, capture another ionkan smuggler refuelling in the orbital station, request assistance from the Orakayn High Command when we discovered she had a cargo full of Class 9 prohibited substances, then sit back for another lazy week.

Nothing ever happened back here, it was a lovely planet for a backwater, but a boring duty as a Commander.

Even with the smuggler's constant laughter and remarks of "They're coming for me, you won't stop them!" we were content to just lock her up in the main planet-side military base and leave it at that. Maybe go to one of the handful of planetside cities afterwards for a few rounds and some gambling.

But then, they did come for her.

The Swarm, an arachnid hive mind from halfway across the galaxy warped into the system and immediately attacked without any form of warning. The orbital stations were torn asunder and debris rained down on the cities below, but then the Swarm came down with them.

Days of fighting fruitlessly to just barely hold the main base as city after city fell to the ravenous creatures. One after another all communication points went dark as they were destroyed, or their inhabitants fled. The carnage was indescribable, the final days were truly upon us.

We fired our laser rifles until the power packs exploded from the abuse.

We held the triggers on our slug-throwers down until the barrels warped from the heat.

Cannons, artillery bombardments and even turning our orbital strike rail gun onto the ground targets did naught but turn the forest around us into a wasteland of debris and death.

Mounds of blown apart carcasses and burning wrecks of vehicles littered the landscape around the last base of Linteo. It was only the fact the Swarm had a whole planet to destroy that kept them from overwhelming us.

But now we're all that's left, and in the distance we could hear the roars of the Primarch. Kill him and you cut the ground soldiers off from the fleets control. Had we the resources to try we could at least reduce the enemy's effectiveness for the next sorry group of saps who came here, but there was nothing left.

We were out of power packs, bullets, cannon shot, medical supplies, and burning through our remaining food. Without backup soon we'd be dead, but the hive would get us before then. To make matters worse, that smuggler was still laughing and yelling out from her cell, calling to us that "they'll come get her" and to "start praying".

I was tempted to simply shoot her, but I had only one bullet left and was saving that for myself.

There was a banging at the door, more bad news. I knew that but I still stood up and straightened my uniform. "The commander must never be seen to show weakness", that was the motto he had learned.

"Enter."

His second in command entered, the poor woman looked drained beyond belief. "Commander, they're preparing for their assault. You should be seen by the soldiery."

She was right, I knew it, but I still didn't want to leave this room. Didn't want to face the inevitable oblivion that was awaiting me out there. We had lost, we all knew it. No amount of posturing and pomp would fix this.

But she was right, and I knew it. So I wordlessly nodded, and walked past her, weaving my way through the hallways and up flights of stairs towards our loud and painful deaths.

As I stood on the balcony several stories above the entrenched soldiers, I could see their fear. We few thousand against the endless hordes of the Swarm, but we would stand and do our duty to the end. We would ensure no one who came here would say we were cowards.

But as the Primarch roared, we tensed.

As hordes of grotesque creatures began flooding through the innumerable craters left by the fighting, we looked to our comrades in terror.

As the sound of thundering feet filled the air to the point you couldn't think, we faltered, crying out for deities or family to save us from the fate we knew would be visited upon us.

And then, as if to answer that collective scream something happened.

A roar answered back, a deep and horrifying scream of the damned that shook the very foundations of reality.

Above us, the sky itself became a deep purple then swiftly became a black abyss as a yawning portal to sheer nothingness opened, and out of it emerged a ship unlike any I'd ever seen.

So black as to swallow light, it slowly left the portal, its bulk beginning to block out the very sun above us with its massive form. Bristling with enough weapons to send a Te'rill forgemaster into an orgasmic frenzy, the sound of the thundering swarm was soon replaced by that of constant and continuous weaponsfire.

Before the ship was even a tenth of the way out of the abyss that created it, it had begun firing. Streams of metal and laser were fired in such quantities as to look like a solid wall, house sized cannons threw rods of tungsten with such speed and force that they wholly buried themselves in the earth.

As the colossal structure continued exiting the portal, skyscraper sized chain cannons were revealed that began firing drop pods into the chaotic mess of scrambling arachnoids. Their boosters blasted into the air behind them, creating wings of ignited chemical sprays that appeared to be holding them aloft, but which scorched the ground on impact.

Black armoured beings exited these pods, guns blazing as they tore apart anything they saw, and still more was to come as the tide of this battle began to cease being in the Swarm's favour.

Hundreds of small craft poured from the ship like a waterfall of pure darkness. Equipped with spearhead shaped cockpits they flowed over the battlefield slicing the swarm apart like butter.

Nothing like this had ever been seen or documented. The Studium had taught me every ship, weapon, tactic, and possible offensive technology in the galaxy, but nothing I had ever seen or studied was like what my eyes beheld this day.

Some of those black armoured beings suddenly appeared in the midst of the soldiers below. Having flown down on massive jetpacks, they towered over us like Gods. They didn't even speak to us, barking orders in their own tongue as they rushed to reinforce the walls of our compound with their own forces. Taking over battle emplacements and removing soldiers possessed of years of experience with simple gestures and dismissive waves of hands.

In mere minutes they'd managed to do what we hadn't been able to do in days. And they were not content with simply turning the tide.

It took only a couple of hours to tear through the Swarm's ground forces, but even before they'd finished the titan of a battlecraft was raising itself out of the atmosphere firing up at the swarm's fleet, still waiting in orbit.

I had no idea what to say or do, I simply stood against the balcony, my scales white with both fear and horror.

Who were these beings, why were they here, what did they want? Dozens of questions flooded through my mind in a loop as I watched my oblivion be shown an oblivion of its own.

I heard a stomping behind me and turned around slowly, fearful our saviours had missed a creature, that it had managed to stalk through the hallways to reach me. But it was just one of them, one of our saviours. He leapt down from the roof behind me, the jetpack on his back explaining how he'd got there. One look at him, towering over twice my height and I did the only thing I could think of.

I collapse to my hands and knees and grovelled on the floor before him, my second in command following suit. It took me a moment to register the words said in flawless Galactic Standard.

"Commander Junglor, I am Third General Markus Bastionne of the Second Terran Defence Battalion. It is our understanding you have one Le'til Myongell in your possession. By the orders of Terra I am to take her into our custody." His voice was deep, aged, authoritative. He was not asking or requesting, he was giving an order with the full expectation of being obeyed even though I was not even of his species let alone his military. I got up and tried desperately to not cower before him, failing to steel my voice as I responded.

"General Bastionne, thank you for saving our lives but I cannot grant your request. The Orakyn High Command still has to question..." Before I finished my sentence there was scattered cries of alarm from the courtyards below. I snapped around, fearful of the worst.

Every single terran soldier was staring up at me, their hands all resting on weapons as they stopped whatever they were doing to observe their General's next command.

"Commander Junglor, the Terran government has already cleared this operation with the Orakyn High Command. If the Swarm had not decimated communications in the region, you would already have been informed of our approach. We *will* be taking Miss Myongell with us when we leave, regardless of your personal feeling on the matter."

There was more steel in his voice this time, and after the display they just put on I couldn't blame him. He didn't seem the type to lie, or the type to make threats idly. If the Orakyn High Command had indeed allowed them to come here...

"Corporal, go release her immediately." My second in command didn't even salute, just got up from her almost prone position already sprinting to get out from under the visored gaze of the Terran General. "General Bastionne, I feel it is my duty to ask... why Terra has appeared on the galactic stage again after centuries of isolation. Just to take custody of some smuggler?"

“Miss Myongell is in possession of a Writ of Protection. That means that no matter where she is, if she is in danger Terra is bound by oath to protect her, or to avenge her if she is killed. To you she might be a smuggler, to us she’s a valuable asset.”

I had no reply, for no reply would come. This day was simple too unbelievable for words, too strange for extensive interrogation. We simply waited in silence until the Corporal informed me of the smuggler’s release. Soon we saw the young ionkan woman far below, exiting the main structure as she walked towards the Terran soldiers.

I looked back out over the decimated field surrounding the base. Mountains of dead were being burned creating pyres of smoke that swallowed skies finally left clear by the temporary departure of that behemoth the Terrans arrived in. The smell was horrific, chemicals and burned flesh filled the mouth and nostrils, choking you with its scent.

This world would likely recover from the onslaught, but this battlefield was so torn apart by lead and laser than it would never be anything but a barren wasteland of half glassed earth and craters.

If they would go to this length to protect one asset, Gods help anyone who threatened someone they actually *cared* about.

And they don't stop coming, and they don't stop coming, and they don't stop coming, and they don't stop coming :P

Seriously, thank God for door shifts at Christmas, I'm coming up with story after story after story, finally able to materialise ideas that have been rattling around in my head for months!

Depending on how things go with how I wanna do things and work and stuff, this might actually be my first two parter, as I really wanna write about Terra's re-emergence on the galactic stage in this universe. I have a whole idea months ago that I realised would work beautifully as a sequel so who knows you might see one soon enough.

But for now, as always, I hope you have had as much fun reading this story as I did writing it! And if I don't see you before the new year have a happy and safe holiday period! :D